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UNCLAS WELLINGTON 000837

SIPDIS

STATE FOR ECA/PE/V/G/F- TBLATT, JHATHAWAY
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SUBJECT: FORMER NEW ZEALAND IV TO LEAD US - NZ BUSINESS
RELATIONS COUNCIL.

1. Former participant on the IVLP program Mr. Stephen Jacobi (grantee from June 2003) has been appointed Executive Director of the New Zealand United States Council. The Council is an influential lobby group that enjoys the ear of NZ officials. Within days of his appointment, Jacobi wrote a newspaper piece calling on the Government to strengthen ties to the United States.

2. In 2002, Mr. Jacobi was identified by the Political Economic Section of US Embassy Wellington and nominated for the program as a future leader in US-NZ business relations. This has proved to be an excellent nomination.

3. A NZ US Council press release states: "The New Zealand United States Council is a non-partisan body funded by both business and government to promote New Zealand's relationship with the United States. Stephen Jacobi, a member of the Council's Advisory Board since 2002, was formerly Chief Executive of the New Zealand Forest Industries Council. "When it comes to securing New Zealand's future, the United States is an indispensable nation and this is clearly recognized by the major political parties as well as the business community" said Rt. Hon. Jim Bolger, Council Chairman, "the Council is determined to see the already significant relationship further developed and we are delighted to have attracted someone of Stephen Jacobi's caliber and reputation to help us achieve this".

4. On 25 October 2005 Stephen Jacobi wrote a column in the business section of the Dominion Post newspaper (the Wellington daily which has the second largest circulation and the most political coverage) in which he outlines the aims and objectives of the NZ US Council and the future prospects for closer economic and trade relations. A full transcript of the piece can be found at:
http://www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/0,2106,3454580a1_865,00.html

5. In his column, Jacobi reminds readers of the firm and positive relationship between New Zealand and the United States, ".there's no getting past the fact that New Zealand has a key interest in the strongest possible relationship with the United States" and, that the NZ US Council was, "prepared to stand up for the importance of a strong relationship between the two countries". Regarding a free trade agreement, he says, "Whether or not an FTA can be achieved, New Zealand's best interests in the US remains. Now that the new (NZ) government has been finalized, the council stands ready to work for a relationship that reflects New Zealand's values and interests, and contributes to our broader economic goals".

5. Post has enjoyed a positive relationship with Mr. Jacobi since his return from the IV Program. We will continue to work constructively with him in his new role.

BURNETT